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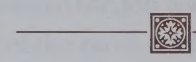
PROSE



THE "TASTE" TEST

by Kurt J. Kotter

I began my BLM career in 1973 as a range conservationist in the Burley District. At that time we had three employees in the entire resource area: the area manager, myself, and Bert Goodman, the range technician. In my mind, Bert was the model for Willie Nelson's song, *Mama, Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to be Cowboys*. He was a rawhide tough cowboy and he took it upon himself to take me under his wing and see that I received a "real" education. He wasn't at all awed by the fact I had a couple of college degrees. In fact, quite the opposite was true. Bert approached his job each day with a large dose of common sense. He didn't pay much attention to the clock. He ate when he was hungry and he worked until the job was finished. Bert didn't have a lot of opportunity for formal schooling; nevertheless, he was one of the most intelligent and educated people I have worked with. He taught me many on-the-ground practical things that I sure hadn't learned in college.

Bert always enjoyed a good joke — particularly at someone else's expense. As the new green-as-grass college kid, I seemed to be on the receiving end of a lot of his good-natured humor. After three years in the resource area, Bert apparently felt I had learned enough to move on to some other assignments. I spent the next three years as the Burley district wildlife biologist. Assignments in Safford, Arizona, and Glennallen, Alaska, followed. In 1986 I had the opportunity to return to the Burley District as a range conservationist in essentially the same area where I had started my career. This assignment provided me the opportunity to work with Bert in the resource area once again.

The north end of Black Pine Valley in southern Idaho had areas of overlapping habitat for both sage grouse and sharp-tailed grouse. On one occasion Bert asked me how a person could tell the difference between sage grouse and sharp-tailed grouse droppings. I facetiously told him that any biologist worth his salt used the old tried and true "taste" test. Bert laughed my comment off and we continued with our activities.

Several days later the two of us were scheduled to look at a proposed burn area in Black Pine Valley to see if it had much winter sage grouse use. That morning, as my wife packed my lunch, I noticed that the trail mix she had bought contained a rolled soft candy covered with powdered sugar. The thought crossed my mind that the pieces of candy looked exactly like sage grouse droppings! All I could think about was the fantastic chance to give Bert a taste of his own medicine.

Later that morning, I carefully planted a few rolled pieces of my powdered candy in a clump of grass near a sagebrush shrub I could easily find later in our survey. I waited for Bert to get fairly close and then I "found" the sage grouse "droppings." I asked Bert if he could identify the droppings. He wasn't sure, so I proceeded to show him via the "taste" test. I picked up a couple of candy rolls, looked them over very carefully, popped them in my mouth and began to chew. Bert's mouth dropped open, he turned a pale shade of green and shook his head. He said, "Kotter, you dumb _____! What do you think you are doing?" After a few moments of careful chewing in deliberation, I told him the droppings were definitely sage grouse and I asked him if he wanted to try it for himself. After questioning my ancestry and general IQ, he strongly declined my invitation. I had planned to wait until lunch and share my trail mix with him; however, when it appeared he was going to be sick right on the spot, I let him in on my secret. Besides that, I don't think I could have kept a straight face until lunch. What a delightful moment! Thinking about it today brings a smile to my face and lightens my mood.

Bert's retirement is a real loss to the Bureau. I regret that the BLM's younger range management specialists won't have the opportunity to know and work with Bert. He was a very important influence early in my career and one of the colorful characters that have made the BLM an interesting and enjoyable place to work.

By the way, according to Betty, his wife, Bert still isn't a great fan of trail mix!

DIRTY WINDOWS

by Clair Whitlock

In the olden days BLM offices were not the comfortable abodes that most employees enjoy today. Shoshone had its own cinder block cold in the winter and hot in the summer office/warehouse combination, courtesy of the CCCs. Boise was upstairs in an old downtown office building and went upscale by taking over and revamping the post theater at old Fort Boise. Burley resided in a CCC barracks that basked in the ever-present bouquet of the Burley stock yard. Do you get the picture?

This yarn concerns the Salmon District, which occupied an aerie situated above a five and dime store overlooking main street. This was a two room "suite" with large windows that provided a view of the Purvis Cafe, Jimmies Lunch Counter and, most importantly, the Owl Club. From our vantage we could spot a "braved up" constituent leaving the "Club" and jay walking his way in our direction, allowing time for us to get braced. BLM shared the 2nd floor variously with a bone crusher or an attorney. The two offices shared a unisex rest room that was described in one report as the only indoor restroom the Washington D.C. auditor had used that smelled like and was as cold as an outdoor privy. Heat was provided by a sawdust-fed furnace that could be relied on to blow up on the coldest morning of winter. The backup heat was a pot-bellied stove in one room of the suite.

In the summer of 1955, DM Elmer Sniff received word from on high that we would be favored by a visit by Washington HQ, Area II HQ and Idaho State Office dignitaries. District clerk Zeola Craven suggested to Elmer that the view of the main street was somewhat obscured by dirty windows that probably hadn't been washed since before the Grazing Service took up the space some ten years previous. She allowed that the dignitaries might be impressed by being able to better see the Owl Club and any potential "braved up" clients. Given the green light, Zeola approached the landlord, a Mr. Cavaness, with the request for clean windows. Cavaness was also a grocer of long experience, including time with the Safeway chain, and the proprietor of a grocery store just down the street from our office.

The news of visitors from Washington threw Mr. Cavaness into whirlwind of activity. He painted the walls and ceiling, slicked up the foyer and re-oiled the floors. Next came the pot bellied stove. We can't have them think this is a backwoods operation he concluded, so out went the stove. With the stove went the metal pad on which the stove set, leaving behind a four-foot square patch of white wood, the surviving remnant of sixty years of floor oil jobs.

A wide-eyed, perplexed look passed over Mr. Cavaness' face. He stood back a couple steps, cast a glance right and left and then grabbed two chairs and placed them over the white patch. "There," he said, "you can't outsmart an old Safeway man."

Well the big day arrived and the dignitaries filed through the door. First came state director Russ Penny whose first words were, "Hey Elmer, where's your pot bellied stove?" He was followed soon by Gerry Kerr, chief of range in the Washington office, who asked, "Elmer, what did you do with the pot bellied stove?" Ches Sealy, chief of range and forestry from the Area II Office followed close on with, "What the hell did you do with the stove, Elmer? Did you pitch it out the window?" The "Safeway solution" failed the test.

Well, we never told Mr. Cavaness that his "Safeway" camouflage job flopped. On the other hand Mr. Cavaness never did get around to washing the windows and they still carried years of grime when the office moved to the Fish and Wildlife Service Fish Hatchery near the Salmon Indian Village. The "Safewayman" phrase however has been carefully preserved and is used often by Betty and I to describe any of our completed innovative and inspired projects of which there have been many.

JUST ANOTHER DAY IN THE DESERT

by Jack L. Hamby

During my second summer as a cooperative education student at the Eagle Lake Resource Area in Susanville, California, I had the opportunity to learn what real world work outside of college was like.

At the beginning of the third week back in the office, my supervisor had given me a stack of project files and a wad of field maps and said, "Here, check all of these." Being gung-ho, I photocopied all the files and maps and made a game plan.

I prepared my workday by timing my activities to be at the farthest point from the office at noon and then work my way back by close of business. A four-ten schedule allowed me extra time in the field—especially in those extremely remote areas of northeastern California and northwestern Nevada.

Having reached my scheduled lunch area around 1 p.m., I wanted to complete one more project inspection before working my way back to the office. There was a windmill in the area, and with a peanut butter and jelly sandwich in one hand and a PI form in the other, I proceeded to check it.

Near one corner of the concrete pad under the water trough I spotted a folding plastic eyeglass case. Being a person who wears corrective lenses myself, I thought someone had lost their glasses and maybe a name was in the lining (like my mother used to do for me).

Upon opening the case, I discovered a small metal pipe and a prescription pill bottle. I opened the pill bottle and inside was a small amount of green leafy stuff — well cut. Not being entirely naive (and after all, I had five years of college), I realized that I had stumbled upon someone's stash. It was dope! Pot! Marijuana! My first reaction was to close the case and look around to see if someone was watching. This windmill is a three hour drive from Susanville, on the edge of a large flat. Other than a few cows, wild horses and pronghorn antelope, there was no one for miles.

I jogged back to my truck and used my two-way radio to call the district office and ask for the district ranger. Within a few minutes I was informed that he was unavailable. I explained the situation and the person at the other end said to return the item back to where I found it, mark the spot and go on with what I was doing. "Okay," I thought to myself, "someone else knows procedures better than I do, so Jack, just do what you are told and get back to work."

I continued with my scheduled work and was inspecting another project about five miles down the road when a call came over the radio from the district ranger. He said that since I had broadcast to everyone and their brother over our two-way radio that I had found some drugs, I needed to bring the entire bag, and anything else in the vicinity, back to the office. "Bag?" I thought. He also said I needed to be back before 5:30 p.m. I informed him that I would be unable to make it by 5:30, so I would just leave it in the district manager's office. There was a pause and the ranger stated that leaving pot in the district manager's desk was unacceptable and I should make every effort to be at the office before the safe was closed.

I picked up everything I could find around the windmill — one sock, a tuna fish can, a plastic bag, and several cigarette butts (I didn't touch the toilet paper). I left the flat at warp speed and navigated several dirt roads faster than I should have. Upon reaching a paved access road to US 395, I felt the back end of the truck sag and heard a flopping sound. I was very familiar with that sound — I had a flat.

The shoulder was wide enough to pull the truck off the road and get my equipment out to change the tire. Five minutes into the exercise another truck pulled up behind me. It was one of BLM's heavy equipment operators. He recognized me and asked if I needed help. I assured him that I had things under control but

I was in a bit of a hurry. He said he suspected that since I was carrying a paper sack full of marijuana. "Paper sack?" I said to myself, "Who said anything about a paper sack?" He said he had heard it over the radio. He then asked if I had it on me. "No," I said, it is in the jockey box." There was a puzzled look on his face and I could see he was wondering how I got an entire grocery sack full of dope in the jockey box of a half-ton Chevy pickup. The equipment operator was reluctant to press the issue, and by then I had finished changing my tire. Back on the road.

The truck was cruising pretty fast as I approached US 395. Just before reaching the highway, I noticed several cars stopped along the shoulder of the highway adjacent to the small landing strip at Ravendale. Upon closer inspection, a small plane had taxied through the fence and onto the highway. The pilot was walking around the aircraft and a California Department of Fish and Game truck was parked next to it. I saw no emergency personnel, so I called the Susanville Interagency Fire Center (SIFC) dispatcher to report a plane parked on US 395 partially blocking traffic.

I was asked who was calling and I provided my name and which office I was out of. There was a pause and then they repeated everything that I had told them. "Ahh, Hamby, this is SIFC dispatch. You say there is a plane parked on Highway 395 at the Ravendale Airport?"

"Affirmative," I replied.

A very pregnant pause followed. "Ahh, Hamby, this is Dispatch, are you still bringing in that garbage bag full of marijuana?"

"Oh great," I said to myself, "They think I am smoking the pot and now I am seeing planes on the highway."

"Dispatch, this is Hamby, that is affirmative, I am in route to the Susanville DO to secure the item and I am in a real big hurry. Could you please dispatch an engine from BLM's Ravendale Fire Station to at least confirm what I am reporting?"

"Hamby, we will dispatch an engine and notify highway patrol."

"Thank you," I replied, "There are no injuries so I am leaving the scene."

A few minutes later, I heard dispatch sending out an engine from Ravendale Fire Station. "Ravendale Fire Station, please respond to an alleged plane crash at the Ravendale Airport."

"Thanks," I thought, "alleged plane" — just great. Not only do they think I am smoking dope, but they think I am seeing planes." I passed the BLM engine and CHP unit racing toward the scene.

After the CHP passed, I realized I was doing well over the posted speed limit. Strange thoughts started racing through my mind. First off, I was completing my probationary period as a co-op student. Second, I had a bottle of marijuana and a pipe in the jockey box. And third, I am traveling over the posted rate of speed in an area notorious for CHP officers who enjoy writing tickets to federal and state employees. My entire career flashed and ended before my eyes.

I slowed down enough to ease my comfort zone and watched the time crawl by on my watch. It seemed forever before I reached the district office. 5:44 p.m. . . . I was too late. Now what? I beat on the front door and contemplated my short-lived BLM career.

The door opened behind me. The ranger had waited. I told him how glad I was to see him and he responded that he had acquired the combination to the safe and had waited for me when everyone else had gone. He asked for the evidence and I handed him the bag with the sock, tuna fish can, plastic bag, and of course, the glasses case with pipe and dope. The ranger dumped out the bag and checked the pot. He said, "Is this it? Where is the rest?"

I asked "What rest?"

The ranger said he was informed that I was bringing in a garbage bag full of marijuana. I assured him that I said I was bringing in a bag of garbage and the marijuana was in it. He looked at me, smiled, and said, "Relax, I'm not accusing you of holding out on me. Besides, you are not stupid enough to risk getting caught with dope in a government rig."

Oh great, I had just had a flat tire, saw a plane wreck and set a new land speed record in northeastern California with a bottle of marijuana in my jockey box — and all from the front seat of a government truck.

The ranger said I looked a little tired and I should go home. I agreed with him and asked if this was a typical day in the BLM. He said not really, but my career was just beginning.

As I thought of this being a typical day in the desert, one of the last lines from the first *Star Trek, Next Generation* movie, rose in my mind. It went something like — "I am hoping this isn't going to be a typical mission," said the first officer.

"No," said the captain, "I am hoping they will be much more interesting."

And so they have been.

FIRST WILD HORSE HELICOPTER ROUNDUP UNDER FLPMA

by Chuck Otto

It was hot and windy and the dust blowing off the jagged sagebrush-covered hills made it even less comfortable. I sat my horse in a low ravine, hunkered down behind the tall greasewood that was meant to camouflage me from the band of wild horses that we expected to come galloping out of the west.

It was June of 1977, and I had been working for the BLM for almost 10 months as one of a three-man crew of wild horse wranglers in the Rock Springs District of Wyoming. Somewhere up the drainage was Buck Mangus on his big dun gelding, head wrangler Vic McDarment, and the wild horse specialist for the district, John Winters. This was the third day of a roundup that was to run for 10 days straight. Buck was the one true Wyoming cowboy among all of us and had spent most of his life in the saddle. Vic was a Native American, originally from California, and the best roper we had on the crew. I'd spent several seasons as a dude wrangler in Yellowstone National Park prior to being hired by BLM, and now at the ripe old age of 23, was the least experienced of the crew.

But experience was something to be gained by doing and we were all involved in something no one in the Bureau had done before. We were using a helicopter to roundup wild horses from the Red Desert.

The Wild Horse Protection Act of 1959 stopped the wholesale roundup and slaughter of wild horses for dog food by private individuals, and the 1971 Wild Horse and Burro Protection Act prohibited the agency from using motorized equipment in roundups. Together, the two acts had allowed a large increase in wild horse populations, and overpopulation was creating problems. The BLM's Organic Act — The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 — revised these laws by allowing BLM to use helicopters to safely and humanely roundup animals. We were the first crew to use helicopters under the authority of FLPMA.

We had been stymied the previous year, trying to roundup horses the old fashioned way from horseback. Although we were in the saddle from dawn to dusk during the fall of 1976, we had only about 35 wild horses to show for it. We had hoped this roundup would be different.

Although we were technically part of the Green River Resource Area under the leadership of area manager Art Tait, we had been detailed to the Rock Springs District's Division of Operations under the iron fist of Don Schramm for this operation. We were also working closely with Brady Baldwin from the division, who was our BLM "observer" in the helicopter — there to ensure that the pilot abided by BLM restrictions. The BLM had contracted with Powers/Hawkins Aviation out of Greybull, Wyoming and we had Dan Hawkins as our pilot. Dan was flying a yellow "bubble" Bell helicopter. Because this was a first, we were under orders from both the Wyoming state director, Dan Baker and the Rock Springs district manager, Neil Morck, to not do anything that would jeopardize the future use of helicopters. We had lots of media and wild horse group representatives watching the roundup.

Vic and John had done a lot of legwork for the roundup, talking with old horse runners from the 1950s about techniques, traps and wild horse behavior. In order to run horses effectively you had to know about their behavior. Wild horses in this part of the country had, for the most part, descended from ranchers' horses and from Army remount studs that the U.S. Cavalry had peppered through the area up until sometime after World War I. Although there was talk of some blood strains from Spanish Conquistador horses, nothing could be proven.

Nevertheless, the horses of the Red Desert were and still are some of the better looking wild horses you can find. Big, well-muscled bays, roans and sorrels were common. In the southern part of the Red Desert around Adobetown, there were paints and palominos as well.

The social order of wild horses is set in a hierarchy that revolves around the band stallion, or stud, as he's more commonly called in these parts, and the lead mare who normally makes many of the day-to-day decisions of the band. The old horse runners we talked with, many of whom had used old single engine planes to help with the roundups, told us about the need to neutralize or distract the lead mare, and the overriding need to never let a lead mare or stud get away since they would be spoiled on a trap and would spot one with whatever band they might be with after that. We soon learned the wisdom of this bit of advice. Most of these oldtimers also told us to shoot the lead mare and the band stallion as soon as we recognized them; then the band would be docile and easily herded after that. Of course we couldn't do that, but we planned to distract their attention by having outriders come in behind the band right before they were herded into the trap by the helicopter.

We were even using an old horse runner's trap for this roundup. The trap was still standing when we found it. We rebuilt it with railroad ties and woven wire, and connected the trap with a holding corral and loading chute made with Powder River panels. Then we cut fresh sagebrush and tied it to the posts and wire all around the trap as camouflage. Day after day we worked on the trap getting it ready. Luckily, we had some of the Rock Springs fire crew helping us. Those new Powder River panels were heavy and we had a lot of 'em. Plus, we had to sink a lot of posts and reset some of the old ones, so were glad for the help. We'd built a portable gate with canvas sheets that we'd pull across on a rope behind the horses once they were in the trap.

We'd already learned much about running wild horses in the past two days. Our first day had started off with a bang by bringing in a band of 14 horses; running them out of the west hills down the big dry wash and right into the trap. I was on the gate that day along with John Rodiac from the fire crew. As the horses galloped past us into the trap, followed by the wranglers who had picked up the band not far from the trap to help push them in, John and I had jumped up and pulled the gate shut.

The band had an old white mare in the lead and had been followed near the end by a dark, bay-colored stallion. They were strung out a little bit and the white mare had just about come to the far side of the trap about 100 yards down the drainage, when the stallion had lumbered into the trap. As the other wranglers jumped off their horses to help us with the gate the old lead mare had just kept going right on down into the

side of the camouflaged trap hitting a big solid railroad tie head on at a good lope, snapping her neck and killing her instantly. The rest of the horses stopped and milled around nervously, not knowing what to do now that their leader was dead. All but the big bay stud at the back. He wheeled around and came back at us at the gate like a locomotive and although we yelled and jumped and waved our arms he barreled on through that canvas gate like it was butter and headed back out to the west where he'd come from. We were lucky to hold the rest of the band in that day but we did. And we even got another little band of nine horses later that day. Although we'd only killed one horse and had one escape, we also had a whole press corp hiding in the hills for this event and the old white mare had lots of pictures taken of her which didn't do much for our public image. Although loading the wild ones onto stock trucks wasn't easy, we got it done, although we had to rope the colts out of the herd and load them separately so they wouldn't get hurt by the wild frenzied fright of the larger horses as we scared them into a narrow chute and up a ramp into the truck.

My horse suddenly lifted its head and cocked its ears to the west. For a moment all I could hear was the sound of the hot dry wind blowing down the wash, but then very faintly came the low buzz of a helicopter. Although we'd only been at this for three days and, at best, we were only getting two or three runs per day, the sorrel gelding I was riding was already habituated to the routine that would start soon and now that he could hear the helicopter he began to get antsy, shifting from one foot to the other and starting to fight the bit. I reached down and tried to soothe him with a quiet word and my hand on his neck, but the anticipation of the coming helicopter was getting to be too much.

I could see the yellow helicopter pop into view between two low rolling hills and a moment later the sound suddenly intensified. The walkie talkie I had in my saddle bags crackled to life as Brady tried to let us all know where the horses were and what they were doing. The gelding started spinning around in the wash wanting to run after these wild ponies . . . run hard and run fast as we'd done for the last two days. With a rush, the first of the wild horses flashed by me. Then I could hear the yells of the other wranglers as they emerged from their hiding places to push the horses into the trap and were more worried about us behind them than looking for the trap ahead of them. We were about a half mile out and I loosened the reins, gave the gelding a sharp kick in the ribs to get going (which he really didn't need but my adrenaline was up now too) and with a yell we jumped out of the wash and fell in on the right flank of the wild horse band. There were 16 horses, still bunched together which means the helicopter must have picked them up pretty close to the trap and had not had to haze them very far. Some of the younger colts were falling back a little, but when we emerged yelling and screaming like banshees, they caught up with the rest of the band fairly quickly.

We thundered down the dry wash, the sorrel running hard with his head low and body lined out, his hooves pounding on the soft valley sediment. Being on the right flank we had to negotiate several side drainages to keep our position. We came to the first little cut which was about a foot deep and three feet across. The sorrel took it in stride and leaped across it, hardly missing a beat. The second drainage was more substantial and we plunged down behind the wild ponies in a cloud of dust and scrambled up the far side. We were nearing a bend in the wash and just beyond the bend would be the wide open gate of the trap.

We were rapidly bearing down on the gate when my radio once again crackled to life and Brady excitedly told us that "that big bay son of a bitch" was coming down a side canyon to the northwest. I looked off in that direction and saw the big bay stud that had escaped from the trap on the first day, running as hard as he could on an intercept course with the lead mare. I briefly thought about the warning the old horse runners gave us about horses that escape a trap; the pace of the chase didn't allow much pondering. John and Vic broke off to try and cut him off but we all could tell he'd timed it perfectly and we couldn't stop him.

He came down alongside the wing of the trap, squealing and shaking his head from side to side and intercepted the lead mare right in front of the trap gate. She slid to a stop and wheeled around running right back through the

rest of the horses who shied and broke in all different directions. The stud was now at the end of the fast splintering group with his head low and outstretched on his long neck, his ears pinned back and his teeth bared as he drove the horses back straight into the thin line of wranglers. I saw the helicopter scream overhead and bank sharply to the right and then it was lost to sight over the low hills that lined the dry wash.

As the horses scattered in front of me, about three broke to the right and I followed on the sorrel gelding yelling as loud as I could to turn them back toward the corral.

Although not very high, the hills were steep and rocky. The gelding and I pounded up the slopes as fast we could through the dust and rolling rocks. Just as we broke over the top we were met head on by Dan Hawkins, Brady Baldwin and the yellow Bell helicopter. The helicopter was about three feet above my head and was trying hard to turn the horses back toward the trap, too. I could see by the look on Dan and Brady's face that they weren't expecting me to be there and instantly I knew I SHOULDN'T be there. Dan tried to turn the helicopter and gain altitude but it was hot and he didn't have much speed up and only succeeded in turning the copter.

The next few seconds were a blur. I turned the sorrel and tried to head back down the slope. He was a good horse and tried to do what he was told, but the helicopter was faster and the tailboom swung toward me at the same time he turned down the hill. I grabbed the saddle horn and swung down against his neck on the side away from the copter, doing my best imitation of a Cheyenne warrior to try and escape the chopping, revolving blades of the tail rotor. It swung across and slightly above my saddle and I half expected to see the gelding's head explode in a shower of blood and bone but miraculously the rotor missed him. The rotor wash was strong enough to envelope us in a cloud of dust and blew my cowboy hat off, even though I was under the sorrel's neck. We stumbled down the hill, the helicopter roared off and I began to collect myself.

Several of the wild ones loped by, but my enthusiasm for the chase was suddenly over and I let them go. The sorrel and I walked back to the trap and the rest of the roundup crew. The helicopter landed in a few minutes and about all we could say to each other was, "That was pretty close!" We'd learned a lot that day about the big bay stallion and the need for a helicopter that could deliver more power and lift in these conditions; and for the need to know where everyone was when things went to hell.

We had a vet on contract from Green River and as we walked down to the vehicles on the far side of the trap he pulled out a couple six packs of ice cold beer. I swear I downed that beer in about eight seconds and it was without a doubt the best beer I'd *ever had.*

That day was not a real success, but we'd learned a lot. By the time that first roundup was over we had caught 140 head of wild horses, and although subsequent roundups in different trap locations were even better, this one — the FIRST one, the first one in the nation under the authority of FLPMA — is the one I remember the best.

By the end of the summer I'd left the wrangling crew behind as I started a new job as the Green River Resource Area forester/outdoor recreation planner. I would go on to complete the wilderness inventory for the resource area, then head for the Carson City District as a fully fledged outdoor recreation planner; then to Great Falls Resource Area as an ID Team Leader, Lewistown District as chief of planning; and finally to the Judith Resource Area as area manager, where I am today. But those early days in the saddle in the Red Desert will live with me forever, with the memory of a smart bay stallion, the whirring of a tail rotor only inches above me and the sorrel gelding still fresh.

WILD HORSES AND AN ANGRY MOOSE

by Jay Spielman

When I was first hired by the Bureau, I worked in the Billings Resource Area as a geologist. At that time, there were only seven employees in the office. As the junior employee, I occasionally had to stay in the office while the rest of the staff was in the field.

One summer day, everyone else was out but the secretary and me, so I was acting Area Manager. I took a phone call from a French journalist, who was preparing a story on the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range. The journalist told me that he had secured a helicopter to fly over the horse range and photograph the horses.

He told me that he had obtained permission to fly over the horse range from BLM, but just wanted to verify it with me. I told him that I had not heard of his request, but that if he had talked to someone already, to go ahead and get his photographs.

About an hour later, I was again called to the phone. This time, it was Ed "Moose" Zaidlicz, the state director, who was more than a little upset. Evidently, the helicopter pilot, who was far more familiar with the horse range than I, called the state office to confirm that he was authorized to overfly the horse range. Anyway, Moose told me in no uncertain terms that flying a helicopter over the horse range was a no-no; it violated the 1971 Wild Horse and Burro Protection Act. I tried to explain myself, but I don't remember getting very far.

I was still one of those "career conditional" employees, so when I left work that night, I was sure my career had just ended. It probably would have, too, if the flight had gone ahead.

My boss was more amused than angry when he got back to the office, and smoothed things over with the Moose. I think the experience made him realize that coordination is a "relatively" important concept, especially when he had a green employee. And I learned that, in a resource area, a geologist doesn't just do geology!

THE BARE FACTS

by Robert Parker

I was an outdoor recreation planner stationed at Aravaipa Canyon in the late 70s. The folks stationed there could probably fill a book with stories. Even Edward Abbey, author of the *Monkeywrench Gang*, worked in the canyon. Anyway, I was provided an older horse (about 30 years old) named San Manuel that had been ridden so many times down the canyon that he knew the way better than any human. Other BLMers before me had ridden him in carrying out their duties, which basically consisted of talking to hikers and checking permits. On one occasion I was riding down a trail when San Manuel suddenly veered off through the mesquite trees. At first I was curious about where we were headed, but quickly discovered a couple of backpacks leaning against a rock. He, of course plodded right around the rock, startling a couple in a sleeping bag. Maintaining a professional bearing, I simply asked to see their permits and wished them a good day.

RAW DEAL AT SONORA

by Stu Carlson

He was turning out to be one hell of a guy!

Old Pop, as I'd silently named my brush patch guide, never faltered or broke stride on the steep, oak and manzanita covered hillside. The eighty-year-old gold miner was exhibiting the physical prowess of a frisky goat. As he scampered about, my out-of-doors skills regretfully were more akin to that of a desert tortoise. Old Pop had the vigor of a teenager and was picking up steam. He was a tough act to follow.

It was an uncomfortably hot California summer day in 1966. A cruel sun was basting the west-facing Sierra foothills and, with sweat soaking my shirt, I was beginning to sag behind my new found friend. Earlier, I'd driven down to Sonora from Sacramento on historic State Highway 49 for my baptism as a recently certified, ego inflated, Bureau realty specialist. That ensuing half-day ramble was my first official governmental land examination. It would be a highly memorable experience.

After gaining access through several locked gates to the isolated 320-acre parcel of public domain, I located Old Pop in his weather-beaten, one-room, wood-framed shack. He was a short, pretty darned scrawny, unshaved but friendly chap who looked like he could have used a good meal. Following a very polite, cautious introduction, I nervously launched into a memorized dissertation on a pending "good deal" that the government had for him. At that point, Old Pop suggested that we save the talk for later and that we instead take a walk up to his workings.

Prior to my transfer from Oregon, Modesto County had approached BLM with a Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) application for coveted public lands where Old Pop mined. The forested, undeveloped acreage brought smiles to the local officials as they contemplated it as a site for a planned community college. On the highly inflated California realty market, similar pine woodland tracts would cost a bundle. Under the popular R&PP Act, Modesto County would get a patent almost for nothing.

However, there was a major roadblock to the scheme. The parcel was located in Brett Hart country or what is known as the California "Mother Lode." Even though the legendary 49'ers had come and gone, almost all unpatented public lands in the locale are criss-crossed with gold mining claims subject to the outdated but still valid General Mining Law of 1872.

The proposed community college parcel was no exception and Old Pop was the resident, working owner of several lode claims. As such, the Bureau's Folsom District faced the sensitive task of prodding my new acquaintance either into relinquishing his claims or facing costly invalidation procedures through the administrative law courts.

It was the Bureau's suspicion that the claims lacked sufficient gold to warrant a prudent expenditure of funds or labor to develop them. These conclusions had been carefully documented by Folsom's colorful mining engineer, George Scarfe Jr., a Berkeley graduate, retired US Navy captain, one-time tin can skipper and eventual Napa Valley grape grower.

That being the case, I was charged with convincing Old Pop that it was in his best interest to sign away his mining claim interest and forego a beloved life of dust, drilling and blasting.

This task, as anyone with half a heart would realize, was not what I would have hoped for as an initial BLM realty assignment. Earlier, the Modesto college gang had verbally agreed with BLM to a deal wherein Old Pop could live out the rest of his life in the security of a basement dormitory room. Accordingly, I had a carrot plus some limited leverage in my awkward, less-than-enthusiastic negotiations.

Prior to that drive into southern San Joaquin River country, my immediate Bureau supervisor Lars Ericson

and I discussed a game plan for dealing with Old Pop. Ericson, a UCLA graduate geologist and onetime Army paratrooper, was also concerned about Old Pop's health. Properly astute, crewcut Lars had apparently been in contact with one or more of the miner's offspring, who suggested that their recluse dad was in ailing health and that quite possibly his days at the small mine site might be numbered. Ericson suggested several times that I go slow with the elderly gentleman and that I not risk "running him into the ground." Since Old Pop was at least forty years my senior, and was further in purported "poor health," Ericson's request didn't seem unreasonable. I promised to go slow.

Anyway, several weeks later and after a considerable amount of time playing follow-the-leader with Old Pop, he suggested that we take a needed hilltop rest in the shade of some indigenous digger pines. Who was I to argue as I collapsed alongside my surprisingly cordial host? True to my earlier pledge, the last thing I could be charged with was that of setting an unrealistic pace for the ageless argonaut. Several large, greenish flies tried to annoy me but I brushed them away with the wave of my hat. Perhaps they were seeking retribution for the foul, evil deed which I was now a party to. This Modesto County woodland was their world and I was an outsider who would eventually alter their environment.

While we savored the mid-day break and rested our feet, Old Pop suddenly pulled out a pocket knife and began to collect some grayish-white mushrooms that were growing about. A dirty cotton sack was soon filled and my scruffy buddy added that they were quite valuable. He indicated that upon slicing and then air drying, the paper-thin parcels, would be sold. He added wryly that they added to the profits from his pickins.

Old Pop's mine was walk-in drift of no more than a dozen feet that lacked a ceiling and was open to the stars. He was actually driving a six-foot wide cut, not into the face of the mountain, but rather atop an outcrop. There seemed to be but limited striations of quartzite along the walls of his small, man-made indentation which he optimistically contended promised future wealth.

After viewing Old Pop's removal efforts, I could better understand why a skeptical George Scarfe held negligible financial promise for the property. Further, there was little evidence in the way of debris, equipment or remnant explosives suggesting that the so-called mine had been recently worked. Perhaps Old Pop had run out of steam or money or both.

There was also a growing suspicion that my new friend was possibly stretching a tall tale and that the exploratory hardrock trench had an unsuccessful history that might have preceded even his arrival on the site. Like many down-on-their-luck miners or squatters in the Sierra foothills, they probably survived, not by the fruit of their labors, but rather from the open handed, ask-few-questions charity of the California welfare system. It went without saying that minus outside assistance, Old Pop would have starved on that barren, unproductive acreage.

By the time we'd worked our way back down to where my GSA pickup truck was parked, the noontime temperature seemed sufficient to fry eggs. I was anticipating a hot, unpleasant drive back to Sacramento. In the late 1960s, air conditioning was still considered too much of a luxury to be installed in government vehicles. Our Bureau road warriors often developed the body odors of bath-shy Idaho sheep herders. After a long day in the desert, you really got to know the chap seated alongside in a rig and especially what brand of, if any, underarm deodorant he was using.

Upon reaching my host's abode, the old timer asked if I'd like to share a brew.

"Darn right!" I responded.

Common sense and a great thirst suddenly held sway over what many a rigid, government blue nose might consider proper, no-entanglement protocol in situations of that kind.

Without ceremony, Old Pop gingerly pushed open an ineffective screen door and we entered into the dimness of his corrugated roof shack. Inside, it was only slightly cooler than the air outside. A small, rusted, two burner wood stove stood dormant along one wall opposite a ragged, somewhat greasy, quilt-covered metal cot. Several wood

food crates were nailed to the walls, obviously serving as storage shelves since they held an assortment of canned goods and other personal items. Two fly-speckled, grime-covered windows limited sunlight into the interior.

My friend evidently lived a spartan life. There were no electrical lines into his unpretentious hideaway nor was there a refrigerator or an ice box. My growing concern as to how Old Pop kept anything preserved or cool was soon answered.

With a movement that belied his years, he dropped to his knees and pulled away several six-inch wide floor boards. Below was a yard-wide sump of dark, foul-looking water. Where it came from, I can only guess. Since it wasn't a fresh water spring, I suspected that it was possibly the drain or runoff from his sink or worse.

Anyway . . . quick as a wink, Old Pop submerged an arm nearly up to his shoulder. After groping for several moments, he pulled out a slime-covered six pack of canned beverage. When the splintered flooring was reset, my fiendishly happy host yanked a moderately cool can free from its plastic harness and thrust it toward me.

Old Pop seemed quite proud of his innovative, backwoods cooling system. His murky impoundment seemed to work.

During the next hour or so, we happily drained the entire six pack while sharing in a lot of boy talk. Once one got past the smell on the sun-roasted rat's nest setting, who cared? A great one-on-one fellowship developed.

When I finally begged off in order to leave, he tried to give me a sack of dried mushrooms. Old Pop, like many of our unfortunate, forgotten elderly, was still eager to continue "shooting the bull," but I respectfully declined his offer. Given the isolation of his cabin, the kindly old man obviously encountered very few humans. Further, considering his frugal, very primitive lifestyle, perhaps his own kin had also abandoned him to the elements. He was a true loner but perhaps not necessarily of his own choice.

In spite of my thankless mission, Old Pop made me promise to come back. While my host desperately needed a bath and his secluded foothill haven might well make the local zoning board retch, I had been a welcome guest. To his credit, my crusty comrade declined to relinquish his questionable mining claims. While the Sonora venture had been thought provoking, I'd nevertheless failed my first governmental realty assignment.

Today, picturesque Columbia College claims 3,000 students and is one of the few community colleges in California that has on-campus housing. The local academicians boast of their rural setting, which has been pretty well preserved. Many oak and conifers were saved when classrooms, dorms and such went up. The aesthetics have changed noticeably since my first visit to the locale. If you gotta have another college, that Motherlode, hill country site pretty well served its purpose. It can probably be argued that the once isolated parcel of woodland public domain is currently sustaining a higher and better use.

Old Pop's ill-fated mine workings are also a thing of the past. By now, he too has invariably turned to dust and is a forgotten part of the California landscape. While the elderly miner was a gem to deal with, I can't even recall his name. The real downer to this tale is that the Yosemite Community College District and the Modesto politicians apparently reneged on their earlier pledge to provide onsite, lifetime quarters for my friend. Unsympathetic administrators, I suspect, refused to accept food stamps or air-dried *Agaricus campestries* for precious campus bunk space.

While it is noted that politically correct Columbia College seemed to promote the enrollment of the underrepresented, unwashed, ragged Old Pop apparently didn't fit the social profile.

CHANGE

by John Dutcher

Sometimes when I'm sittin' on stand in the late afternoon of a cool October day, waiting for the old gray muzzled buck to wander in from the dense tangle of second growth, I sense their voices, their presence, their faces. The souls of the loggers that made this part of Oregon special. Leaning back on the softening fir stump, not wanting to move a foot or leg for fear of disturbing a forest spirit, I look west at the brilliant red orange setting sun. Then back again to the game trail below me amidst the thousands of young fir, pine, madrone, and yew. Vine maple along the stream to the left has been nipped by frost over the last week . . . shows the autumn colors in places. Somewhere in this vastness, the thumping of a pileated woodpecker drumming relentlessly into an old snag rattles the stillness. It's soon followed by the excited chatter of a red squirrel scolding something . . . they're always scolding something.

My eyelids lower a bit. On stand since before daybreak, then back again after a stretch of the legs and lunch. Returning to end the day at this favorite spot. Like a comfortable pair of boots. It always seemed good to be back. My eyes droop again as I squint into the slowly setting sun. Or was it the sleepiness in my body? The last vestige of late afternoon light seeps through the young forest. A profusion of colored ocean waves, finding small crevices and gaps to place one final, fleeting spot of warmth on the forest floor and then be gone. Raising my eyes, I see the faces rising now in the evening chill. Not clear. Blurred, as they were in my mind from fond yet distant memories . . . but never forgotten. The men and the boys who worked these hills not many years back. Some have left this world . . dead: others resting in their older age somewhere unknown to me now. Listen . . . look.

Over there, by that tall, straight fir. The new forest next to that burned and rotted stump. Ben's face lifted through the branches. Tanned and wrinkled, like well-worn leather. With those dark blue eyes always a twinkle. Even with only one leg, he and his son, Junior, were the best. Junior died when a young second growth barberchaired... crushed against another tree. Ben's still around someplace . . . I think.

To the right, across the creek, past the red and yellow maples . . . that's Buster. It's been a long time since I'd thought of him. He called his gypo outfit Federal Logging if I remember right. Didn't have much money. Equipment usually broken down, but he worked as hard as an ox. Always gave you more than he had. Taught me that sometimes you have to go back to the right to move ahead to the left. He worked for weeks with a broken cat that summer. But work he did.

Who's that now? See the face just below us. Floating above that short, silvery pine snag. He's probably looking for pitch wood in that one for a warmin' fire. Yup, that's Jack. Logger from Murphy. Always had a warmin' fire and hot coffee for me. Dead now they tell me. Died young. He was always good for a yarn to spin at our hunting camps. Crazy guy, but like the rest, he worked hard to keep his family goin'. A smile crept over my face as I recalled that wet, spring day I'd seen Jack trying to clean out a mud-filled culvert on the new road into Gobblers Knob, just a few miles north of Trail. "Hey Jack!" I'd shouted as he pulled himself out from the culvert inlet. "Didn't that fire hose from the pumper blast that stuff out of there?" "Nope," was all he said, with a wicked grin on his face. "But I think I figured out a way to clear her out real good. Better move your rig on back a bit." He lit the fuse and ran like hell. Ka boom! Smoke and rocks, mud and chunks of metal. When it cleared, the dynamite had taken out the middle of the road and most of the culvert . . most of the culvert still plugged. Nothin' that a new pipe wouldn't fix, I guessed.

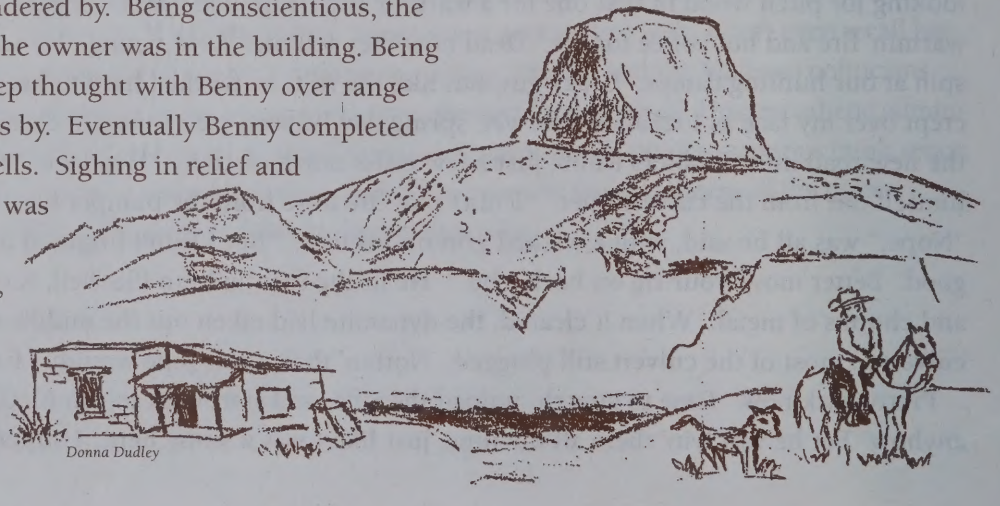
Pretty dark now. Time to stretch, unload the rifle, and start back to camp. Glad my old buck didn't show anyhow. Bet he was lyin' there all the time, just like I was a sittin' here. I suppose we're too good of friends

for anything except to wave and snort at one another. As I slowly shuffled up the last few chains of the short, steep climb along the overgrown yarding corridor, I took one last look back into the forest. The forest that had been a friend to so many of us then. There were more faces now. Some moving slowly up along side, then behind the old pumpkin we'd left stand for the critters. Others past the notched stump used for a tail hold. Still hard to see them clearly. Gus, Al, Steve, Bill, Shirley, only man I ever knew named Shirley. Even Little Lyle and the Bullbuck we nicknamed "Big Bad Bob." One thing they all had in common I thought, as I puffed the last few steps to the long since quiet landing. Their word and their handshake were always as good as gold. You could count on that . . . and I did. The pale white, quarter moon was just beginning to show above the knob. I pulled my jacket collar up tighter around my neck as a north wind whispered a chilly note over the ridge. An owl lifted off a branch on the gnarled black oak guarding the past . . . and floated down to join my friends.

BENNY AND HIS BLUE HEELER

by Kathy Walter

Benny and his blue heeler live near the base of Cabezon Peak Wilderness Study Area in New Mexico. His hundred year-old adobe home graces the ghost town of Cabezon, once a rest stop. Benny journeyed from the high desert of the Rio Puerco Valley, where the coyotes and blue heelers play, and ventured to the Duke City and the Albuquerque District Office. Benny is a big, strapping rancher, not particularly fond of the ways of bureaucracy, especially since he has been around long before bureaucracy had a meaning. Dabbling in management and during an ambitious moment as acting branch chief, Benny paid me a visit. He parked his blue pickup truck and his blue heeler in the visitor's parking lot, just outside the front door. Benny greeted me in Spanish, handed me a grazing bill and requested a signature. Being new at the formalities of range protocol and not sure what to do, I offered Benny a cup of coffee and a comfortable chair, and scampered off to seek consultation and advisement. Consultation and advisement is often a rare commodity and as time pressed on, the blue heeler became distraught. Jumping out of the bed of the truck, the loyal dog began to howl at the front door. The good hearted public room receptionist overhead the mournful wails and scratching, and thought another stray had wandered by. Being conscientious, the receptionist inquired to see if the owner was in the building. Being behind closed doors and in deep thought with Benny over range concerns, the inquiry passed us by. Eventually Benny completed his business and bid his farewells. Sighing in relief and pleased that another customer was satisfied, I fetched a fresh cup of coffee. The receptionist, being a kind-hearted person, felt utmost sympathy for the stray and decided to take the



Donna Dudley

dog to the Humane Association. Soon after, Benny saunters to his blue pickup truck and discovers that his dog is missing. He storms back into the building, returns to my office and is extremely excited about the disappearance of his dog. Dog? Dog? What Dog? My dog that I left in the truck! Where is he? Placing the fresh cup of coffee on the desk, off we go at high speed around the building asking about a lost dog. Someone exclaims that the receptionist just took a dog to the Humane Association. No problem. We will call the Humane Association and tell them the dog belongs to us and that we are just having a bad day filled with confusion. We called, and yes, the dog was there. Yes, we would be over immediately to reunite the owners. We jumped into the blue truck and headed for the Humane Association. No problem Benny, relax, we'll get your dog back. After a 20-minute ride, we finally arrive. Benny and I run in the front door and we both start explaining how the blue heeler jumped out of the truck and howled at the front door while Benny was doing business at BLM. Sorry to cause you trouble, but the dog belongs to our customer and if we could retrieve him, we will be on our way. The Humane Association representatives were very cordial but they wanted to see some papers. What papers? Papers to show that the dog has been neutered. Benny is getting frantic and says his dog is a working dog, and they live on a ranch. That's fine, but we need papers to indicate the dog lives outside the city limits or papers to show he is used for breeding. But we don't have any such papers, Benny lives far away from town, near Cabezon in the Rio Puerco Valley. "We are really sorry, but to obtain these documents, the fee will be twenty dollars and you will have to get them signed at the City Hall and the processing time is about two or three days. We will be happy to keep your dog for that time." Benny starts to wane in patience with the female representative, extends his six-foot frame to its maximum vertical length and glares. Feeling intimidated, she calls for reinforcements. A burly fellow enters and the dilemma continues. No papers? Well, how about shot records? Sir, my customer gives the dog his shots. We will be happy to call the vet for you to see if the shot is current. Benny is getting frantic that he may not get his dog back anytime soon, starts to lean over the counter toward the burly fellow. I'm beginning to get frantic that this dilemma will never end and BLM will have one very unhappy customer. Turning pale, I suggest to Benny that the chair over in the corner looks comfortable and I will see if I can reason with the supervisor. Explaining to the supervisor about the comedy of errors, and exclaiming the dog has an owner, and they live on a ranch and I will lose my job if we don't get his dog back today, the supervisor begins to sympathize at my relentless whining and snivelling. The compassionate supervisor retrieves several sets of papers for Benny to sign. Regaining my composure, I notice a Humane Association coffee mug and offer to purchase it. I also offered a small contribution to the cause for all the trouble we have inflicted upon this worthy organization.

When the blue heeler saw Benny, he acknowledged his master with delight, a yip and a wagging tail. Two hours later we arrived back at the BLM office. Benny handed me the new mug and we mused on my fleeting flirtations with management and the mysterious ways of bureaucracy. As Benny left town and headed west back to his home in Cabazon, I am sure he was glad to be where the coyotes and blue heelers play.

GO SOUTH, YOUNG MAN

by Kenneth Roegner

I completed my forestry education at Oregon State University in 1951, with a degree in forest engineering. In 1955, nearing the end of four years in the U.S. Air Force, I began applying for jobs in forestry with both private industry and the federal government. The first job offer came from the U.S. Forest Service on the Monongahela National Forest. I turned it down because I wanted to return to the West Coast. The Bureau of Land Management offered me a job in the Eugene District and I accepted. The travel west to Oregon began in Blue Island, Illinois, and after a week or so, we drove into Portland to head south for Eugene. My wife, Joan, and I visited the BLM office in Portland, in the Bonneville Power Administration Building. I checked in with the personnel officer, who said, "Just head south and stop by any BLM office, talk to the district manager and if you like the job, stay there." I wonder how many perspective employees received that kind of offer in the 1950s? It was unexpected. So we drove down highway 99W to Salem and visited with Otto Krueger Sr. I remember him stating that he took good care of his employees. Then it was on to Eugene for a visit. We stopped in Roseburg, but we only visited Roseburg Lumber Co, which offered hourly wages when you worked. For some unknown reason we didn't go to visit the Roseburg BLM office. So we went back to Eugene and there it was that we began a 35-year career with BLM that took us to Medford, Oregon, Redding, California, and back to Portland, Oregon. My first supervisor and selecting official in the Oregon State Office for a position of forester working in fire management was Ken Burkholder, who was the district manager at the Eugene District at the time of my first job offer. By the time I arrived in Eugene, Lester Dunn replaced him as the Eugene District manager. I look back with great satisfaction on my career with BLM and will always remember that first verbal offer of employment from the personnel officer: Go south and visit any BLM office!

THE LINEUP

by Kurt J. Kotter

In 1986, BLM opened the Deep Creek Resource Area in Malad, Idaho. The office was part of the Burley District; however, being detached it enjoyed a great deal of autonomy. We followed the philosophy espoused by the saying "God is in heaven and the Czar is far away." Since the office only had seven employees, we developed a close working relationship with each other and we all tried not to take ourselves too seriously.

Our district manager, Jerry Quinn, was constantly talking about the apparent influence of the chairman of the District Grazing Advisory Board, Dale Pierce. Mr. Pierce, in addition to being very politically astute, had also been a personal friend of the Idaho state director, Delmar Vail, for many years. At times, it seemed that Dale knew more about what was going on inside the BLM organization than we did!

Of course, we are all familiar with the "Chain of Command" pictures that are so common in nearly all BLM offices. In a lighthearted moment, several of us decided to arrange these pictures to more accurately represent Mr. Pierce's apparent influence within the BLM. As I remember, the pictures were supposed to be arranged in the following order: 1) President George Bush, 2) Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan, 3) BLM Director Cy Jamison, 4) Idaho State Director Delmar Vail, and 5) Burley District Manager Jerry Quinn. One of the employees asked Dale's wife for a picture. While her curiosity was somewhat aroused by this peculiar request,

she readily gave the BLMer a small picture that we enlarged to fit the picture frame. At our next area staff meeting, following an appropriate bit of ceremony, we placed Dale's picture between the state director and the district manager on the wall in our conference room. We felt this series of photos might have more accurately portrayed the "chain of command" in Idaho BLM and we enjoyed a good laugh at the district manager's expense.

After the meeting broke up, we all went back to our normal work routine, and the pictures were soon forgotten. A few weeks later, Jerry Quinn came to Malad to hold a meeting with the resource area employees. Again, we had completely forgotton about the pictures until we were all in the conference room and the meeting was well underway. To this day I don't remember what Jerry talked about in the meeting. All I could see or think about was Dale Pierce's picture on the wall. It seemed to me the picture was about the size of a large roadside billboard advertisement! I kept waiting for the district manger to notice the pictures and ask us for an explanation. I wasn't really confident that he would appreciate the humor of what we had done. As soon as the meeting was over, we hustled him out of the conference room. He hadn't noticed a thing! In fact, it was some time later that we shared our story with him. To his credit, he enjoyed the joke as much as anyone.

To this day when I see the traditional "chain of command" pictures in the various BLM offices, I always check to see if Dale Pierce is staring back at me.

REGULAR JOE

by Johari Rashad

I came on board at BLM on July 1, 1990, as the Chief of Employee Development. I knew that as an outsider (i.e., not from BLM and not from the Department), I was an "unknown entity" and that it would help me a great deal to visit each BLM State/Center to meet with training officers and management officials to introduce myself and discuss my job and how I could help them. So in 1991, I set out to visit each State Office/Center; it took me six months. I am probably one of the few Washington-based BLMers who has been to every state office/center (as well as numerous district offices and resource areas)! I even helped out on graffiti eradication project in the California Desert District during my visit there. I have dozens of anecdotes that are treasured memories (and I have photos of all these visits!) that I could share, but I'd like to highlight four in particular.

First, when I was visiting Idaho, I had dinner with Patty Brunner and her husband Dave. They gave me a tour of their wonderful house and we sat down to eat dessert after dinner. It was only when I was getting ready to leave that we realized that their dog had tried to eat my eyeglass case! Patty and Dave sent me a replacement case about a week later.

Next, during my visit to Arizona in April 1991, William Gibson, an archeologist, served as my tour guide on a trip to the Richbar Site and the Badger Springs Site. I learned about vesicular basalt and had the strange experience of walking around dead cows (who had broken their legs in holes on the hillside) and mounds of cow pies. As we were standing on a hill, he pointed out a rattlesnake. It took me a few seconds to see where he was pointing and actually see the snake. As he was watching the snake emerge from the brush, I was frantically looking around for a safe escape route! As a city kid, I was not interested in seeing how long or how big the snake was! I was afraid to run, though, because I was afraid of catching my foot in a hole similar to the ones that had been the dead cows' undoing. I'm sure all the folks back at the Arizona office had a great time laughing at the Washington Office tenderfoot who wanted to run from a rattlesnake.

Another memorable moment came during my visit to Montana in July 1991. Kaylene Patton drove me to the Lewiston District and we saw the Missouri Breaks. During our drive, I kept remarking about the round hay bales that were scattered around the countryside. I said they looked like giant cat food pellets (having spent summers on my grandfather's farm in Maryland, I was used to rectangular hay bales — I had never seen round ones).

I talked about them so much that Kaylene made a u-turn in the middle of nowhere and parked the car. We climbed over the fence on someone's farm so I could go and hug a round hay bale. (She took a picture of me doing this!)

When I got back to my office a couple of weeks later, there was a small package from Kaylene on my desk. Inside was a small, aromatic hay bale about the size of a brick that she had made for me from her father's farm. I kept that hay bale in my office until 1994, when I went on an IPA assignment: I never failed to smile when I looked at it and thought about us climbing over that fence just so I could touch a round hay bale.

Finally, for my trip to Utah, my schedule of visits and meetings was planned by Sherry Foot (then Clayson), the Utah training officer, and Wayner Garner, the Utah personnel officer. On August 2, 1991, we drove from Salt Lake City down to the Escalante Resource Area. After I successfully completed the Calf Creek Trail (after getting caught in a thunderstorm), A.J. Martinez, the Area Manager paid me a high compliment: he said I was "okay."

After we left Escalante, we drove to Tropic, Utah, where we were supposed to stay for the night. It was so late by the time we got to the hotel (about 10 p.m.) that our rooms had been given to others! We drove around for a while trying to find other lodging, but we were unsuccessful because it was tourist season. I had jokingly said to Wayne and Sherry that even if we found only one room we would figure out sleeping accommodations. No such luck! They apologized profusely throughout our driving around because I guess they thought this "Washington Office official" (me) was going to go back and snitch on them! Finally, I (again) jokingly said, "Why don't we just park the van somewhere and sleep in it?" Believe it or not, Wayne drove us to Panguitch, Utah, and parked the van under a tree on someone's front lawn! Sherry slept in the front seats, I slept on the middle seat, face down with my feet up in the windows, and Wayne slept in the back seat. Thank God no townspeople approached the van — they wouldn't have known what to think! In the morning, we drove to a truck stop where we washed up in the restrooms and had breakfast. We finally got to Bryce Canyon and had a great time.

By the time we got back to the Utah State Office, the story of our adventure had preceded us. Even to this day, almost five years later, people in Utah still tease me about it, asking "Are you the one who slept in the van with Sherry and Wayne?"

I made the state office visits trying to show BLM field folks that I was a "regular Joe." I think my adventure in Utah proved that. As a result of my visits, I have developed and maintained friendships and excellent working relationships with people throughout BLM. I was grateful that my boss, Tom Allen, supported me in doing so much travelling; these visits were my real introduction to BLM and I am a more effective employee as a result.

Alaska State Office Personnel

TIME STANDS STILL FOR SOME

by Bob Anderson

During my first year with BLM in 1969, I was in the field near Pinedale, Wyoming, doing a Public Law-167 Mining Claim Determination; and being somewhat unsure of my location, stopped by an old homestead tucked away in the hills, miles from people. As I departed from my gray BLM pickup, an oldtimer approached from the house and said, "Hello there, are you from the Taylor Graze?"

ARIZONA ACCENTS

by Daniel H. Nowell

Revisiting my years with BLM, I recall many stories created around experience too good to forget. Many of them can't be told without going through the boundaries of today's "political correctness." I am reminded of these few thoughts and anecdotes:

In the summer of 1993, I was on an appraisal assignment in far northern Arizona just below the Utah line. I stood in the company of the property owner overlooking land he wanted to trade. From a plateau above the Virgin River, he attempted to describe the angular boundaries of the property saying, "This country lays kinda funny . . . north angles off one way and east another, so that they don't face true north and east." Legend has it that after receiving an appraisal report stating the value of his land, a property owner sent his reply: "I am sitting in the smallest room in my house. I have your report before me, soon it will behind me."

In a span of several years, I've found that making a living is not the same thing as making a life.

Extra Arid Extra Dry

Phoenix summers are notoriously hot, sometimes reaching above 115. They can be very dry, too. Even in a good year rainfall averages only eight inches." One summer just after I arrived, we were having one of those long-haul droughts. Finally, I commented to Phil Brown on the persistence of the dry season. He leaned back in his chair, thought for a moment then exclaimed, "Well I guess I shouldn't complain, I've seen it rain, but I sure would like for my kid to see it too."

Fair Trade

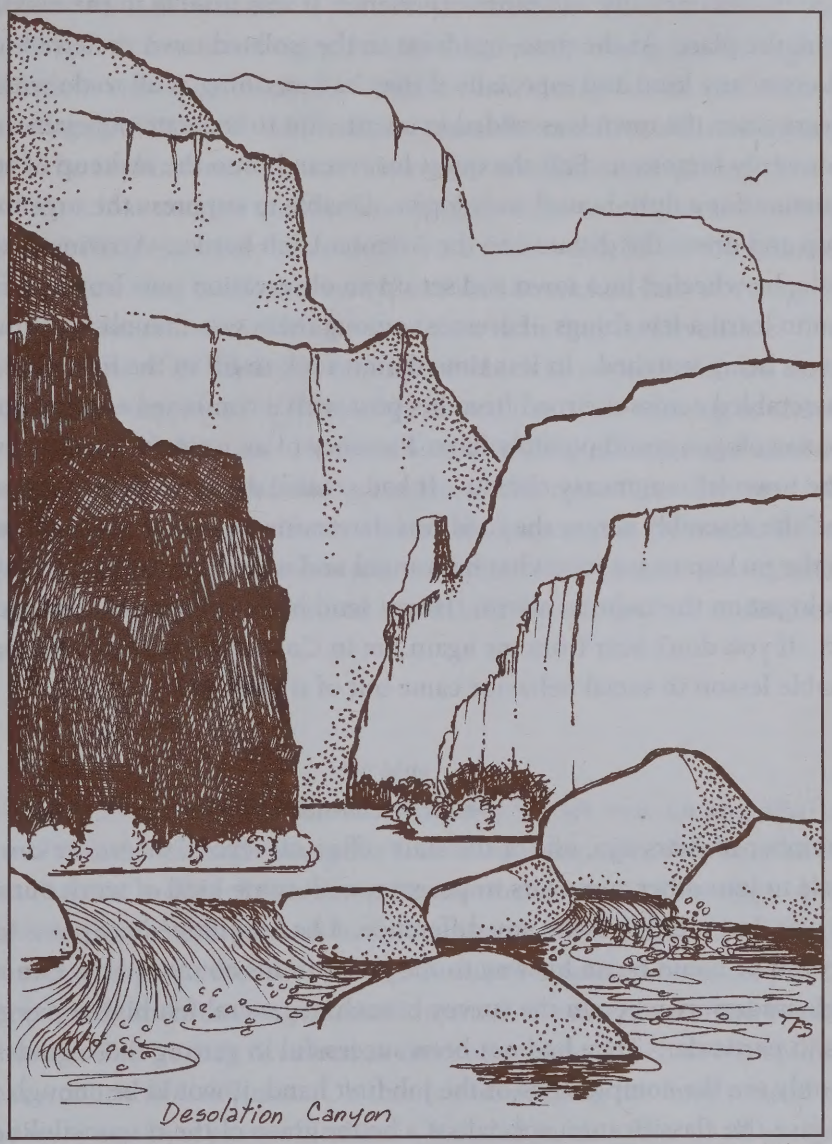
During a field trip to northwest Arizona in 1981, I was invited to the kitchen table of a newly established rancher named Kenly. I listened carefully as he explained his version of how he acquired the ranch in a three-way trade with a Phoenix developer. According to the figures I had, and the information he had given, it seemed the place had come to him at what would be a little on the costly side. Before we finished, I got around to the obvious questioning on the sale price and how it had been set. From his expressions I could see it was not the first time this had crossed his mind. He explained, "When a man with money meets a man with experience, the man with experience ends up with the money and the man with money ends up with experience."

Manganese Miners

Once an appraisal assignment took me to an unoccupied part of southern Mohave County on my way to investigate a land sale near the Santa Maria River. To make use of the transaction in my appraisal, I had to evaluate its physical features and verify the particulars of the deal, including a few manganese mining claims. There were no telephones out there, or many other signs of civilization for that matter, so I traveled 40 miles over dirt roads to have a look at it.

Several miles after I started I managed to locate the tract and found it occupied by the new ownership consortium who were engaged in having happy hour. Despite what could be called an unrefined appearance and a general distaste for government, the occupants didn't seem to be all that unfriendly if given ample chance. Maybe they weren't entirely cooperative, but at least they were sincere. Information is what I came for and after traveling so far to get it I was determined not to go away empty-handed. But I could see my work was cut out for me.

Visualizing my presence as a novelty in camp I took little delay in getting to the point. They were willing to listen, but before answering any of my questions the party had a few of their own they wanted to start off with. First of all was the usual demand to know why I needed all this information about their personal affairs. Sensing a clear need to be straight forward with the answer, I began to lay out simple requirements for an appraisal. But before I could get past the meaning of market value a loud objection was raised. "Hell, the govment don't need no appraisal to see what land is worth. All they need is two men with money and an auctioneer."



Thomas F. Slater

Unsocial Study

For reasons I have never completely understood, BLM staffing used to include a number of sociologists. I'm exactly not sure if their focus was supposed to be on internal or external cases. I asked about it once, but never understood the answer. Whatever, they seemed to find business to attend to as did one individual attached to the Arizona State Office several years ago. For some time he had labored with the interest of polygamous life styles in practice at Colorado City. For someone committed to the discipline of social study the community must have been a real attraction, maybe even envisioned as a living laboratory. However, to his contemporaries with less curiosity and more experience, it was trouble in the making and they warned him to stay away from the place. At the time, residents in the isolated town preferred to be left alone and did not appreciate gawkers of any kind and especially if they had anything at all to do with government. Though it had been many years since the town was raided in an attempt to separate polygamous families, the incident was one that was not easily forgotten. Still the quest for research into the makeup of such a community was just too much temptation for a duty-bound sociologist. Unable to suppress the urge for a visit, our employee located a GSA pickup and drove the distance to the Arizona-Utah border. Arriving at the isolated community according to schedule, he wheeled into town and set up an observation post from the front seat of the pickup. Right away he began to learn a few things. Foremost among them was that observation could be two-way activity, for he too, was being watched. In less time than it took to fill in the first page of his note book, a group of men had assembled across the road from his post with a combined expression of curiosity stronger by far than any lone sociologist could possibly have. Presence of an uninvited guest content to sit and eye the daily workings of the town left an uneasy climate. It had created an obvious distraction from the normal affairs of the day and the assembly across the road was determined to get to the bottom of the situation. The men started toward the pickup to see just what he wanted and when they did, St. George dispatch heard the call. It was the sociologist on the radio in alarm, "Hurry send help! A group of men are coming for me and they have a shotgun. If you don't hear from me again I'm in Colorado City." No one was harmed in the incident, but a valuable lesson in social behavior came out of it after all.

Grade Evaluation

One morning a number of years ago, one of the state office surveyors, whom we can call Plumbob, stopped by to ask for a vehicle to join other surveyors in progress with some kind of work outside Phoenix. I had no idea what the work was, but it didn't make any difference. I had no immediate plans for the Wagoneer, so I handed over the keys so he could be on his way to the job with his counterparts. I know now there was a job classification struggle underway wherein the survey branch in general felt higher pay grades were warranted for some employees in particular. They had not been successful in getting those grades and reasoned that if the classifier could only see the complexities of the job first hand, it would be enough to shake off that stubborn streak. To give the classification specialists a better grasp of the responsibilities demanded by the work, Plumbob extended an invitation to ride along to the job site where the party was busy shooting points. In an attempt to be agreeable, the invitation was accepted and the two set out to the field in my Jeep Wagoneer. A few days later I arrived for work and was just getting started when the good natured Plumbob peeked around the corner. He entered my office with that same friendly smile he left with a few days before. Slowly working it up to an advanced grin, he sat down on the edge of the chair and began gently. "I washed your Jeep up, but I can't give it back to you just yet. In fact the reason I can't give it back to you right now is because it's not finished with the wash yet. You see," he continued, "it's stuck in the Salt River."

Plumbob was a likable kind of guy with a well-developed sense of humor and liked to kid a little. The Salt

is usually dry, so I didn't know exactly what to make of his jesting at first. He was prepared for my doubt and reached for the photos he was going to need for writing the report. Yep, there it was just like he said, in the river all right, only the Salt wasn't dry. The pictures were not just hasty snapshots. No, they were thoughtfully composed photos capturing the occurrence at rising water levels, as if to illustrate the whole affair in three or four acts. If I didn't know better, I might have thought there was some pride in the way they turned out. First in the sequence characterized the scene with the tan Wagoneer in the river bottom. There was a little water around the wheels and several survey party members making efforts to free it from the sand. Next, they showed how the water had risen above the wheels and there were fewer party members to be seen. The final in the series was a spectacle not to forget. At this stage water was going through the windows and there were no party members in view at all, only our classifier left, sitting on the roof alone. One could only speculate what was going through his mind, but I believe causes favorable to the consideration of higher grades could be ruled out. The explanation I got told how our crew had been making their way across the river bed in the vehicle when it lost traction and became lodged in the soft bottom. It seemed only another in the daily inconveniences at first, especially since there were other vehicles on dry ground the wench could be attached to. But no matter how they tried, the wench couldn't be tricked into working. Figuring out how to get the cable to release was a task that would take more time than they had available. This unfolded as a fact with the approach of a Bureau of Reclamation helicopter which swooped overhead then quickly returned. Hovering above the struggling surveyors, a flight member leaned out of an opening to shout from a bullhorn for the men to get that vehicle out of the river. He went on demanding miracles and announced they had just released 80,000 cubic feet per second from the dam up stream. The rest of the story was left to the nature of hydraulics. It took Plumbob two solid days to finish with all the paperwork. He secluded himself from distractions while he filled out all the right forms, wrote a condensed version of the occurence, and submitted the right number of copies. No one ever admitted it officially, but rumor had it that he was unsuccessful at getting the higher grades.

No Mas

Under the direction of Dutch Estheimer, Phil Brown and Larry Shiflet were on appraisal assignment along the flats outside the town of Gila Bend. Soils along the Gila River are so silty they turn to pure powder in the dry periods, and with less than six inches of rain annually, that means most of the time. Aside from their occupation, one thing the two dutiful companions had in common was a keen interest in Arizona history. It was at least equal to that of appraisal, so the fact that the Oatman Massacre had taken place near this location in the 1851 had not escaped their attention. It was also known that a monument had been erected at the site where the victims were buried. The tragedy occurred as the Oatman's and their seven children were making their way by wagon across Arizona to California. On that fateful evening the family made camp on a flat near the Gila River where they were met by a party of Indians. It ended in slaughter of all except two sisters who the Indians took captive and one boy they left for dead. The boy survived and one sister was eventually rescued from across the state, but the other sister died while in captivity. The story was clearly alive in the minds of the two BLM'ers who were determined to find the marker, except for the persistent difficulty they were having with the pickup. For some reason, the engine had begun to run very rough, and finally reached a point where it stalled altogether. Luckily, a local came upon the scene and seeing their trouble stopped to offer a remedy. He suggested cleaning the fine silt out of the distributor to eliminate the problem, as he had done successfully many times himself. His raw image spoke of a background in these matters, so it was

worth a try. Larry, equipped with the better mechanical background of the two, assigned himself to duties under the hood while Phil remained behind the wheel awaiting orders. Working over the hot engine was a sweaty job and a tedious one if all the dirt was to be removed from its hiding places. But in time the task was completed and with the distributor back together, Larry shouted a command to try the engine. Just as the local had predicted, it started right away. Nevertheless, just to make sure it didn't stop again, Phil used the accelerator to his satisfaction, revving the engine to the red line time and again. Now anyone with a mechanical understanding would have to agree this use of the accelerator may have made Phil feel better, but did nothing to clear up the engine. However, it did succeed in stirring up large volumes of Gila River silt, where it could be sucked into the fan and spread throughout the engine compartment where Larry was still holding watch. For some reason it took a moment or two after this revving began, before an arm popped straight up thru the dust cloud above the opened hood. It was waving as if to signal, "No mas, no mas!" The gesture suggested there had been enough revving as far as outside the charge of affairs was concerned. Taking a needed moment to catch his breath, Larry emerged from the engine compartment clearly a different man than he went in. The only white area left on his body were two circles around his eyes which had been closed thru most of the treatment. The rest of him was bathed in brown powder. Still stunned from the ordeal, he walked away from the truck and just stood there in wonder, peering through those circles. Phil exited the cab ready to pass on compliments for a job well done when he caught sight of the spectacle before him. Somehow the display of his partner in a solid coat of powder took him by surprise at first. Could he not have noticed that rolling cloud of dust still hanging high? Whatever the reason, it didn't take too long to overcome that initial surprise, allowing himself sight of the situation from a humorous angle. And he wasn't good at concealing the fact either. It would be safe to say that interpretations from Larry's point of view failed to bring about the same humorous results. Preoccupied instead with the topographical condition he was in, Larry focused his priorities on a return trip to the motel for clean up. Repeated utterances to this effect declared it so with marked certainty, but little else was expressed in the way of discussion. Not even so much as a word about the distributor. Meanwhile Phil had all he could handle trying to subdue his reactions. Maybe the mutterings about the motel were enough. At least they took the place of statements of another kind which could have been more severe. As it turned out, the pair spent the rest of the day in the field without leaving to wash up after all. With a little effort, the monument was eventually located in some brush. I'm sure if the Oatmans could have seen that man staring at it through those raccoon eyes, they would have chuckled too.

CZECH OUT DRMS' QUALITY EQUIPMENT:

STICK IT IN TURTLE AND FLOOR IT, MYRTLE!

by Chuck Grove

Although many of you folks who plant and sell trees (when you're not making smoke) may see Road Maintenance People as White Knights of the Road, undaunted by mundane concerns, let me assure you that such is not the case. Take, for example, that new brush-cutter tractor we put into service last year. It may not be appropriate to give you the brand name of the tractor, but I think I can say that it was made in Czechoslovakia. It was...well, let my letter to the tractor sales rep describes the machine for you:

Dear Mr. H:

A little over a year ago the outfit I work for purchased a new tractor on which to mount a brush cutter attachment. And now we have a question that perhaps you could answer for us. But let me start at the beginning.

When we first received our new —, we all read the operator's manual very carefully, as is our policy. Although some of the instructions were a bit droll, thanks to a pronounced Czech accent in the translation, there was one item that really has us wondering: "Found out defect should be shot immediately, to prevent damages and possible endangerment of the operating security," it reads on page 94. And following up on page 96, it makes itself abundantly clear with, "...all possible defects are to be shot immediately."

Well, we reasoned, that maybe the Communist way of dealing with defectors (this was before the Iron Curtain came down), but here in America, such cruel and unusual punishment is clearly unconstitutional. And even if we were to try it, some Tractor Rights advocacy group would come down on us with both feet.

So when the front wheel fell off the first time, we just stuck it back on (the second time, the wheel had to be repaired and modified). When the steering gear locked up, we overhauled it. When the air conditioner conked out, we had to sweat it out. The wiring system for the lights and windshield wiper has a mind of its own — and it is clearly insane; we haven't psychoanalyzed it yet. We had to replace the voltage regulator, and both batteries. And when the transmission got stuck in turtle — that's International Pictography for LO range — we had to haul the whole rig into the dealer for repairs.

I mean, we have treated this tractor just like our own Justice System treats a habitual offender! We even put the fire out when the brake light switch squirted oil all over and set the rig on fire!

Every new machine is apt to have a few bugs in it. But this has got more bugs than a June night. For a while we consoled ourselves for having been victimized by what our mechanic swears was a communist plot by making jokes about it. Like, the engineer who designed this monstrosity must've been a blank Czech; and, the operator who gets stuck with it for the day is Czech-mated. But there is more to life than laughter, and the jungle is closing in on our road system.

As I said, we've had this tractor for a little over a year now, but there are only about 250 hours on the meter (which I think is still working). But even so, considering the amount of smoke coming out of the wrong end of the engine, I'm afraid the whole thing is about ready to go belly-up. So, reluctantly, we have decided to follow the advice given to us in the manual. Which brings me to our question:

Where, and with what caliber, do you suggest we shoot it?

Yours truly,

"NEXT TIME JACK, KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT"

by Jack L. Hamby

During my first two years as a BLM employee I was part of the Cooperative Education Program in California. This program allowed me to work for BLM during the summer months and still attend college in the fall, winter, and spring.

My first season at the Eagle Lake Resource Area in Susanville, California, provided me the opportunity to learn many valuable lessons that are not taught in school. The first, and possibly the most valuable lesson came from an unlikely source. Eagle Lake has an "interesting" range technician, a "seasoned" gentleman who has forgotten more about horses and cows than many people will ever know.

I was invited to help inspect a Wilderness Study Area for unauthorized livestock and a missing fence. When asked if I could ride a horse I replied, "Of course I can ride a horse, can't everybody?" This was partially true — I had ridden horses as a kid. Hand raised champion palominos, gentle enough for small children to ride (and I have the home movies to prove it). Besides, I had four years of college—I SHOULD be able to ride a dumb old horse. The range technician responded with a devilish smile and a twinkle in his eye. "Tomorrow," he said, "sunrise at the horse corrals." The theme music for several Clint Eastwood movies began playing in my mind.

I met the range technician and the other range conservationist at the Litchfield Wild Horse and Burro Facility outside of Litchfield, California. I showed up in new cowboy boots and hat. Upon seeing me walk up, the range technician exclaimed, "Well look here, the kid has him pointy boots and a straw lid." I straightened up and walked up to the wranglers and asked how I could help. It was 7:00 a.m. and I was informed the horses were already loaded and they were ready to go. I couldn't believe it — I was late! When he said sunrise, he meant SUNRISE! He only smiled and described the area we were to meet for the day's ride.

An hour later we were unloading horses and saddling up. The range technician offered to saddle my horse for me with a smile. Not wanting to be rude, I let him. He explained that we often use rough broke wild horses (mustangs) to do some of our work.

We dropped back into the creek for a lunch break. I was extremely reluctant to dismount for fear the horse would never let me remount. Upon disembarking, I noticed a soreness in my backside. I did not want to lose the horse so I tied his nose as close to a juniper tree as I could get. The range technician looked at the horse and asked how I was doing and I lied and told him everything was under control and I was doing just fine. He just smiled.

When it was time to go I stood up and felt a sharp pain in my back. I thought I was in good shape and yet, after half a day, I was worn out. I untied Flame and went to mount, but as I moved closer, so did he. It actually looked as if he was trying to step on my feet. I jumped back and nudged him in line. The range technician reminded me to check the cinch so I stuck two fingers behind the belt and it felt tight. "Wait a minute" he said. So I waited. After a minute or two the horse let out his breath and I could almost put a whole hand behind the cinch. I realized then and there that this beast did not really like me. I thought about whispering obscenities in his ear but I realized I needed to get back to the horse trailer in one piece. I chose a more logical path and made the animal a deal. After four years of college I should be able to reason with a dumb animal. I promised him that if he didn't buck me off, I would let him have the reins.

After finally getting back in the saddle, I was told to let the horse get a little water. I slackened my grip on the reins and Flame jerked them out of my hands and started gulping water. I was unable to reach the reins so I grabbed the back of the halter and pulled. Flame laid his ears back and bolted up the hill. When I let go, he stopped. I stepped down only long enough to retrieve the reins and look for the other riders.

The other range conservationist had spotted several unauthorized cows in the area and he decided that since we were there, we should put them back onto the private land. The minute Flame spotted a big black Angus cow and her calf he took off after them. They bolted into the juniper and Flame followed. He was ducking under limbs and was attempting to head them off at the pass.

We caught the cow and her calf part way down the hill, and Flame got in behind them and kept them going in the right direction. I was impressed. This horse acted like he knew what he was doing. I gave him a little more slack on the reins and he moved close enough to the cows to bite at them. The calf went into the bitterbrush and the cow jumped back into the juniper. Flame jumped over the bitterbrush and got in front of the calf and pushed the calf back into the juniper with the cow and herded them back onto the trail. I looked over my shoulder to see if my co-workers were watching this impressive performance. They were a quarter mile ahead of me working their cows up the opposite hillside. They weren't even looking my direction.

I coaxed Flame into changing directions and head our herd of cow and calf back toward the other. Flame took me through country that could be called wilderness. He ducked under limbs that were back high—swatting me across the face and chest. I had to recover my "straw lid" several times over the next hour.

We put the cows into a private pasture for the owner to recover later. The other riders turned to go and Flame realized he was going to be in the rear and jumped between two of the other horses and took off down the road to the horse trailer. I couldn't believe it—the horse was going back to the trailer faster now, after several hours of work, than when he was fresh that morning. Upon arrival at the trailer, I dismounted and tied Flame to the side. Much looser than the last time I tied him. I rubbed my backside and waited for the others to catch up. I glanced over at the horse and it almost looked like he was grinning. Okay, so he had won. Big deal, he was just a dumb horse.

The range technician smiled as he dismounted and said he was impressed that I had not fallen off. (Personally, I think he and one of the other had a side bet that I would.) Flame was a little reluctant to go back into the trailer but with a little coaxing he did. My first BLM expedition on horseback was over (and to tell the truth, I was happy to have survived). I wonder if John or Clint ever had days like this. I reminisced about the day's events and thought to myself, "Next time Jack, keep your mouth shut."

The next day in the office I was very stiff. Even walking was a bother. The Eagle Lake range technician was just leaving on another jaunt to the wilderness as I was getting my second pair of aspirin. With a twinkle in his eye and a devilish smile, he asked if I would like to go out again today?

I replied that I had mountains of paperwork and I needed to get caught up. As I hobbled off he chuckled and said, "Stiff?" He smiled and walked away, never mentioning it again.

Later that day I learned our office had two motorcycles available for range work. Now that was more my style, motorcycles don't argue with you, they don't fight you and it isn't a battle of wills. Besides, I had ridden motorcycles when I was a kid — and I have the home movies to prove it.

A CLOSE ENCOUNTER

by Shirley Bye-Jech

I worked in Burns, Oregon, in 1979, 1980, and 1981 doing wilderness inventory. I was one of a crew of three women working for Mark Hosket. Later I learned that some of Mark's coworkers referred to us as "Mark's Angels," after the then-popular T.V. show "Charlie's Angels." We inventoried thousands of acres by helicopter, vehicle, and foot. One day, Mark and I were inventorying a WSA on the slope of Steens Mountain. We were walking through the open sagebrush several feet apart, and all of a sudden, I heard loud screaming and out to the corner of my eye, I saw Mark leap 10 feet in the air, simultaneously dancing with his feet. When he landed he missed the rattlesnake and it had missed him. I tried to control my first instinct, which was to laugh uproariously. After the excitement wore off we walked a few more feet and then decided that was enough inventory for that location that day.

A few years after I left Burns, I learned that Mark and several other people, including Don Geary, the Oregon wilderness coordinator, lost their lives in a plane crash on Steens Mountain. They were on an inter-agency trip to view the WSAs. When I think of Mark I remember what a hard worker he was, what a good supervisor, and a true friend. Of all the things I do in my career with BLM, I will always treasure the field work in Burns. Some of the areas I inventoried will be designated as wilderness some day and that is a legacy I value highly for my daughter and her future children. One day we can visit the wilderness area and I can tell her about my role in helping to protect it.

WHERE THERE'S SMOKE

by Howard Parman

In nearly 20 years working for BLM I've seen the wondrous intricacies of Nature, the raw power of wildfire and beauty of what some people call wasteland. But perhaps the most miraculous thing I ever saw was the meting out of perfect justice.

I witnessed this miracle in the Eugene (Oregon) District where I worked as a forester from 1977 until 1992. In 1984, I toiled in forest engineering, surveying property line and designing logging roads. In those dark ages before personal computers were available, logging roads were designed using calculations from a computer in Fort Collins, Colorado. Minor corrections could be made from a terminal in the office's computer room. Bill, one of my coworkers, needed assistance inputting some corrections from the terminal. He had a deadline for a timber sale contract to meet but his biggest deadline involved a float trip down the Grand Ronde River with his fiancé. He asked for help and I readily agreed.

Bill is one of those energetic, somewhat excitable guys. He could never sit still, had to pace around the room when indoors, and waved his arms when he talked. On this particular day his condition was worsened by the fact he had decided to quit smoking a couple of weeks previous. As a reminder to himself that he really didn't want a cigarette, he kept two books of matches in the pocket of his pants.

Bill and I had no trouble making the corrections and while we waited for the computer to go through its gyrations, the district computer specialist, Bonnie, walked into the room.

"Say Bill, are you looking forward to your float trip with Kathy?" she inquired.

"Yeah, but she's gonna take three suitcases full of stuff," Bill whined. "One will be clothes, the second will be make up and the other will be blow dryers and hot curlers."

"That does seem a little silly to me," Bonnie offered.

"You and I both know there's not enough room in the boat but I'll haul it all over there just to haul it all back." Bill began to pace across the room. "I just don't get it."

"Maybe she wants to look her best for you."

"On a week-long float trip? Nobody looks their best after camping out for a week." Bill's pacing tempo increased."I don't think women understand what camping is all about. I mean it's a time to get back to nature, to become one with the ecology."

"To be dirty and smell like a goat," Bonnie muttered.

"You know what I think?" Bill's pacing paused momentarily then resumed its four-minute mile pace. "It's a Man's World."

I couldn't believe Bill had said that. After all we were both 30 years old and it was 1984. It was like he'd slept through any mention of equal rights and feminism. And Bonnie couldn't believe it either. She was looking at Bill with an expression that said, "Dear Lord, may lightning strike this miserable example of male chauvinistic piggery."

But Bill never noticed. In fact, he began to wave his hands in emphasis that men should hold the superior position in society. ". . . and if you go on a double date, a woman can't go to the powder room by herself. She's gotta have the other go with her."

"Bill," Bonnie said in a tone that would instantly freeze boiling water, "why don't you stick it in your ear."

"Oh yeah?" cried Bill, jamming his hands into his pockets, "I'll tell you, you, you, YEEEOOOW!"

Bill yanked his hands out his pockets, flinging the contents across the room. Coins, keys, a Swiss Army knife, two books of smoldering matches, and smoke filled the air along with oaths of fright and pain. Bill flailed at his offending trousers trying to extinguish the fire he had ignited in his pocket and, looking for all the world like a crazed flamenco dancer, stomped the smoking matchbooks into submission.

Shocked and delighted by this turn of events, Bonnie collapsed to the floor, shrieking with laughter as tears ran down her cheeks. I joined Bonnie in laughter for what seemed like an hour. We regained our composure with great effort only to lose it again as Bill disposed of the now harmless matchbooks.

Several days passed before I realized I had witnessed a miracle. After all, in an imperfect world, how many times can you expect to see perfect justice.

DIGNITY BE DAMNED

by Gail E. Elliott

During the summer of 1978, I was chief of the division of fire management for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) at the Boise Interagency Fire Center. One hot afternoon in July, Bob Webber, who was in charge of the fire operations section in my division, called me. He said, "The 'Dragon Wagon' was being used on a sagebrush fire not too far from Boise, and asked if I would like to go with him to the fire and watch the ultimate fire-fighting machine in action." I answered that I certainly would and that I could meet him in front of the administration building in five minutes.

Bob and I arrived at the part of the fire that the Dragon Wagon was working and watched it operate for an hour or so. About the time we decided to head back to Boise, we heard a radio call come through for a retardant drop

on a section of the fire not too far from our location. We decided to drive over and watch the drop.

Bob's 4-wheel-drive pickup got us to within about two hundred yards of the spot where the drop was planned. We parked in a safe place and walked over to the spot. We could see what the fellows on the fire were planning and positioned ourselves ahead of the relatively slow-moving fire and out of the smoke so we should watch the show.

After a few minutes, we could see the old C-119, owned by Gene Powers, lumbering in and lining up on the drop zone. It being generally customary to make a dry-run before making the drop, we felt secure in our location.

As the plane got closer, we suddenly realized that this was no dry-run! He was going to drop on the first pass and we were too close! He planned to lay a line of retardant about 50 yards in front of the fire and that's where we were!

Both Bob and I had lectured many times on the dangers involved in retardant drops and the disastrous results when people did not get out of the way. It flashed through my mind that some of those people might be able to say, "Why didn't that damned old man practice what he preached."

We broke and ran, but we could see we were not going to make it! So there we were, "assuming the position:" down on our bellies, hard hat pulled down tight, headed toward the plane, behind the biggest sagebrush we could find, and our faces buried in the alkali dust! The drop was made, and lucky for us, the pilot laid it between us and the fire front. We had a little drift spray hit us, but about our only injury was to our pride. We agreed that the prudent thing to do was not to mention the incident, especially to any of the men in our division.

A few days later, Gene Powers was telling about the two guys he put "the fear of God" in. I certainly didn't tell Gene who they were!

JOURNAL ENTRIES

by Lois Simenson

August 3, 1987 - Nelson Island & Bethel, Alaska

It's a pretty uneventful day here, in beautiful downtown Bethel. The weather is still bad. The wind continues to whistle. The wind doesn't just blow in Bethel, it whistles. Visibility has improved somewhat, but still not good or legal enough to fly the chopper out to the villages to do our work. I spent our weather day organizing our Native Allotment case files and plotting land parcels on USGS quads. Boy, there sure is a lot of water out on the Kuskokwim Delta in southwest Alaska! I'm amazed. Why the Bering Sea teases the coastline is beyond me. It ought to just engulf the remaining land and be done with it once and for all. But, it's the other way round. The sea has receded and the glaciers left miles and miles of ponds, lakes, streams and sloughs as far as the eye can see. A person can't tell when flying over it, who wins, the land or the water. Carl and I spent the evening plotting our flight plan. We'll get started about 7 a.m. tomorrow. Hope the weather clears.

August 4, 1987

We can fly! The weather is finally cooperating. First, we went to AVCP, the Association of Village Council Presidents, to talk with their realty specialists, Vernon and Luke. We outlined our strategy for conducting field exams of the Native allotments we planned to do in Kwigillingok (Kwig for short) that day. Since our applicants only speak Yup'ik, Luke is accompanying us to Kwig to interpret for us. We have 14 parcels to

examine, but doubtful they'll get done in one day. I'm as far west as I've ever been in North America, out here next to the Bering Sea. I'm awed that people live out here. It seems so vast and barren and far away. I feel like I'm on another planet.

The weather has deteriorated the farther south we fly toward the Bering Sea coast. We followed the Kuskokwim River south along the delta, as visibility declined. The wind was blowing so hard, our helicopter was just a pendulum swinging back and forth, with what seemed to me to be gale-force winds. My heart beat quickly with each gust, as we zig-zagged our way south. What if we miss the village and keep going out over the Bering Sea? Hope the Russians are friendly . . . I'll just show them my BLM patch. Enough of these thoughts. Jimmy, our pilot, knows what he's doing, right? After all, he flew in Nam. But then again, is that good or bad??? I heard there were a lot of crazy pilots in Nam. Don't think about it. I figured when we lost sight of the river and only saw whitecapped waves, then we might worry a bit. Where's the ceiling? All I see is rain and fog. Well, here is the coast line. I looked down at the Bering Sea and saw enormous waves. Now where's Kwig? Ow, my nose hurt. I had it pressed too hard against the chopper window, straining to see a building, any building. Please. Now the chopper was being buffeted around like a ping-pong ball in a vacuum cleaner. Why did I ever apply for this job? An eternity passes, then Kwig appears. We were all relieved. I could tell the guys were too, even though they kept up good spirits for the trip down.

When I stepped out of the chopper, the wind caught the door and I couldn't close it. It took two of us to wrestle it shut. The wind kept whirling the chopper blades, long after they usually stopped moving. We couldn't see out over the sea, the visibility was so bad. I couldn't believe we had been actually flying in this stuff! We huddled in an old open shack, sheltered from the wind. A Cessna was anchored nearby, if not, the wind would surely have carried it off. It looked alive, like it was struggling to free itself. Well, we decided examining Native allotment parcels was definitely out of the question. So we got back on board and retreated north, toward Bethel. I wasn't as nervous on the trip back, because I knew the weather would improve the farther north we flew; Voila! Almost instantly we flew out of the storm. As I looked down I saw a herd of musk-ox huddled in a circle, heads in, rears out, like a football huddle on a grassy steppe. I snapped some pictures without the proper lens. I didn't care. I'll always look at the group of dark, brown dots on the picture and know I saw them in the flesh! Every one has had special moments in life where the only way to express it, is to say, "My heart is full and I feel like the luckiest person in the world!" That's how I felt just then. Eventually the sun appeared and directly in front of us were two enormous rainbow arcs, one behind the other. Every color was a wide band. They were so huge! How could this be real? Our pilot purposely headed for the center of each one and as we flew underneath the biggest rainbows I had ever seen, I felt that heart-full-lucky feeling again, only more powerful. I smiled sheepishly when I remembered chiding myself in the storm about why I applied for the job. It's these rare, never-to-be-experienced-again moments that remind us why we do what we do. We were approaching Bethel in the evening sunlight. Even though we couldn't get our parcels examined that day, we joked and laughed about a day well spent. We bantered about flying through the storm and our brief stop at Kwigillingok. Odd, but none of us mentioned the musk-ox or the rainbows. I think we each selfishly wanted to keep those moments to ourselves.

"Well, there's always tomorrow," Carl cheerfully quipped as we took off our helmets and flight suits.

"Yup, we'll try 'er again," said our pilot, as he put the helicopter to bed.

I couldn't wait.

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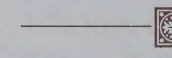
POETRY



POETRY

SAGA OF A BLM RANGE MAN

by Bob Krumm

I started with BLM in the Montrose District in 1949. I was in the first batch of range mangers that graduated after WW II. The District had a staff of 5; district manager, clerk, range con, improvement foreman and me. The entire Bureau had just over 900 employees. I was a district manager in Richfield, Fairbanks and Boise, and associate BLM director at BIFC. I retired in 1977 after many interesting and happy times with fellow BLMers. I wish I could remember more of the great stories. I dug out a poem I wrote for a no longer remembered event in the 1960s.

Galloping Gus was a busy range man
Efficient, courteous, kind
Always off like a shot, he accomplished a lot
Saying, "Can't let the work get behind."

No job was too tough, too hard or too rough
Too laborious, difficult, long
Galloping Gus, a remarkable cuss
Was the pride of the government throng.

He traveled around in a '58 Ford
Rattling, dusty, but fast
The motor purred like a humming bird
The Ford lashed the wind with a blast.

One day on a trail more suited for cows
Narrow, bumpy and rent
Gus tore along like the verse of a song
Eye balling the range as he went.
Over a hill he screamed like a jet
Throttle opened near full
Gus, with his pen, did condition and trend
And never did notice the bull.

The smash was like thunder filling the sky
Rolling, resounding, a din
The bull left the ground, the Ford rolled around
Poor, Gus, had his head bashed way in.

The work now gets done in a dull sort of way
Ploddingly, slowing, no zoom
The program logistics, as shown by statistics
Would make Gus turn round in his tomb.

So here's to old Gus, who was top of the heap
A range man made for the stress
We posthumously furnish, a badge all a burnish
The *Order of the Flying BS.*

Jack Sept

THE CRAZIER LIFE OF A GRAZIER'S WIFE

by Jack (Jacquelyn) Penny

The grazier's life's a busy life. Of that I have no doubt.
When he should be in, he may be in, but chances are, he's out.
I plan a meal for six o'clock — then six o'clock comes 'round
The vegetables are nicely done and the steak is gently browned.
I stir things once or twice or thrice as time goes ticking by,
But age just won't improve the food — it merely turns it dry.
When half an hour or so has passed and I am still alone,
I finally eat a bite or two and gnaw a charred bone.

Now, I know he's really not to blame when he is sometimes late
But it's kind of hard to think of that while I'm glaring at his plate.
I remember once, or twice, or so, when we had
guests to dine. We invited them to eat at six — and he arrived at nine.
And I recall a Thursday night — we were invited out.
He left the house on Wednesday morn and said,
"Without a doubt I will be back tomorrow noon,
and we'll be there for bridge." And he drove out south
to meet a man and floundered on a ridge.
I went alone that night and said, "There's been a slight delay,
But I think he'll be here pretty soon."
He was — on Saturday. But, shucks, I guess I can't complain.

We're even — up to date,
"Cause often when he's here on time, then I'm the one who's late!"

There's just one other angle, though, that sometimes bothers me.
In a group of other grazing folks,
he talks 'priority.' They speak in terms of AUMs and tenure permits, too.
And commensurate ratings seem to be important, it is true.
And overstocking of the range — that's taking such a chance.
All of which is very well — but gosh! I want to dance.

But there I go — I'm off again — and I said I'd not complain.
You'd think to hear me talk that I wish I were single again.
I used to be an office gal — though many years ago.
My fingers flew (the carriage, too) busily to and fro.
But I gladly shed my steno's spread and changed my way of life.
I was bored as hell as an office gal — but not as a grazier's wife.

FROM WILDFIRE TO REHAB

by Cliff Hiatt

Asked what I did to make me glad to celebrate this day.
I'll humbly reply that it wasn't just I, a BLM Army came this way.

With studies of problems to overcome,where native grasses once thrived,
As winds and fire fed Ma' Nature's Ire, that our role in seeding arrived.

Lots of fuel and a stockpile of seed, to slake this "Cat's" great thirst.
Fill drills, hook carts and prepare to start on a loop of five miles girth.

Nomad alfalfa and crested wheatgrass, corrosion to allay
From morn till night, without respite, we continue without delay.

O'er dry earth and rocks, the discs slice on, where sage and noxious weed grew.
High heat and dust, rain and rust, were companions to our crew.

Now, we reflect on all we've achieved and commemorate and say,
"Reclaimed at last, as 50 years passed. I'm glad we've came this way!"

TRAIL-HERD BALLAD

by David B. Hunsaker

Pack-horses scramblin,'
Rigs a-squeakin' across the western plain;
Lightnin' a-flashin' and Thunder a-crashin'
The whole air smells of rain.
The mornin' dawns bright with the
Crack of the whip and everything heaves to motion;
The dust starts to rise like a Yellow cloud from
The herd . . . a great brown and white ocean.
The chuck-wagon moves and follows the herd
As the trail begins to twist,
The cowboys — saddled and ready to go
As the mountains rise from the mist.
Another hour — another mile, but no one stops to rest;
For such were the
Days of the great trail herds
In the time of the Golden West.

A SERIES OF POEMS

by Kenneth A. Platt
Donated by his friend Mr. Zimmerman

Song of the Lonely Ranger
Over Owyhee's "bouldervards,"
Roughly my motored "steed" does bounce;
Driving onward with purpose hard,
Grimly behind the wheel I bounce.
Dodging high center and badger hole,
Skirting the cloudburst and canyon deep —
Such is the Range Examiner's role,
Searching the haunts of steer and sheep.
End of the road, so borrow a horse,
(I'm in the saddle ten days a year,
Ten days of misery and remorse
Oh, the regrets for my aching rear!)
Horses are noble, but be it said
Mine looks the noblest when being led;
I'll earn my government bed and board

Twisting the wheel of a V-8 Ford.
Up with the sage hens and off to the sage,
Out to examine a homestead dry:
"Bronco grass, Shadscale and saxifrage;
Applicant's estimate much too high."
Look up a Basque on Battle Creek,
Talk to puncher on Poverty Flat,
Finish by starlight six nights a week,
Gettin the low-down on this and that.
Time for fireside, friend and wife?
Not in the Range Examiner's life!
Such be the leisures of men of means,
Men unacquainted with rangeland ways,
Sourdough, Sowbelly, rice and beans,
Sunrise and seventeen-hour days.
Far in the sagebrush is my abode,
Putting to action the '38 Code.

*River of No Return**

Born of blue lakes that gem the rugged wild,
Where towering Sawtooths notch the arching sky
In craggy grandeur, leaping range on range
To cling their circling strides across the miles,
And crown a State in mighty coronet:
Nourished by crystal springs and rivulets
Which know their pure existence from the snows
That winter heaps on myriad timbered hills,
Where warming suns, in season, send their bright
Commanding fingers to search out and bid
The icy stores of nature on their way
Again to seek the seas from which they sprang;
Gathering racing waters where they foam
From hidden canyons, ground through granite walls
By unknown centuries of roaring floods;
Gathering other rivers in your sweep —
Each in his own realm king, but swallowed up
By mightier than he — and surging on
In ever swelling current down the haunts
Laid for your course when still the world was young,
And even yet forbidden unto man;
River of No Return, how well your name
Bespeaks the fastness inviolate
Through which your churning waters ever plunge.

**Name popularly given Idaho's Salmon River in its course across the wilderness area of central Idaho.*

REQUIESCAT IN RETIREMENT

by Chuck Grove

I know you've all been wondering, and waiting for my tale
of what it's like to be retired: it's like — I'm out of jail!

But that's the short form. Yes, there is a lot more to the story.
You'll find there are alternatives to wealth. But, not to worry!

Retirement is a scary thought: this life you know will end!
That's why it's always "down the road" —
not "just around the bend" (!)

But wiser counsel got my ear: "Hey, Chuck — You're sixty-five;
The best time for retirement is when you're still alive!"

I mulled it over briefly, and saw the stark reality
Besides, you know, I'm blessed with a retiring personality:

"The truth is this: we all wind down; we all stop running, soon or late.
So quit the forest for the town, while you're still master of your fate."

That good advice I took to heart. I'll choose retirement — yes, I will!
A pension's just a brand-new start! A brand new way of life! But still . . .

Indecision takes its toll. I wish I'd been attentive
At that retirement seminar; I still need more incentive...

RETIREMENT IS

by Chuck Grove

Retirement is "the golden years." Retirement is a blessing.
Retirement is all good things I'm not quite up to expressing.

Retirement is the Nectar of the gods of ancient Greece.
Retirement's the collecting of old Jason's Golden Fleece.

No more rural residents' complaints of fallen trees;
No more climbing slimy backslopes on your hands and knees;

No relentless radios invading your domain;
No more outings (but for sport) into a driving rain.
Retirement is the spice of life.
Retirement is — well, ask my wife:
Now, here we go back through a number of years,
Past kids growing up, through laughter and tears,

Where I said, "When we wed, we'll drink naught but champagne!"
And she said, "Well, all right! Let me hear that again!"

And she did. But somehow, I forgot to advise her:
"Until I retire." Now she's sadder, Budweiser.

"You will live just as well," some will say. That's a laugh!
Retirement will just cut your income in half!

And, since money's the root of all evil from hell —
In retirement, you can't help but live twice as well!

ANTICIPATING ALASKA'S FIELD SEASON

by Lois Simenson

Number 1
Snow-capped ridges
but below treeline
winter's release for spring.

Number 2
Rejuvenated marshland
ducks poised for flight
watery counterparts wing farewell.

Number3
New-born calf
mother stands guard
searching nostrils
rite of spring.

Heading Out to the Field

The stubborn clouds of June
cannot confine such resplendence.
Oh, Denali!

Field Work Revisited
Number 1

Amid salmon and grizzly
somewhere an eagle swoops
an Alaskan shore.

Number 2

Look! There, on the Tundra!
instinctively, like a three-year-old,
I kneel; To admire forget-me-nots shyly waiting.

The End of Alaska's Field Season

Piercing the fog in Turnagain Arm,
dark shapes glide south
fins . . . flukes . . . cycles.

BLM Phoenix Training Center Outing

Listen — far from where I stand
the sound of jackrabbit feet
lightly on desert sand.

QUIET DOMAIN

by Robert G. Lathrop

The softly whispering evening breeze
As it eddies through the tall fir trees.
The pitch slab blazing in the night
With its dancing circle of golden light
Plays a symphony to day's retreat

The screech owl with its piercing cries
As if to dare: "What soul lies?"
Beneath the diamonds set in black

In the lonely verdant, still, outback.
My companion, though we shall not meet.

The narrow, tumbling, murmuring stream
Whose pools reflect the starlight's gleam
Breathes a poem that soothes the heart
And sets at peace this man apart
With a prayerful soft refrain.

And who, a simple mortal am I
To feast upon the night time sky
and gather in the essence clear
Until the first sun's rays appear
But a forester in his domain.

MOUNTAIN SOUNDS: HULLS GULCH

by Ruth Nordstrom Silcock

We could hear the bleating cry of little lambs
Rising lightly above the muffled blatting
Of the distant flock of sheep
Then from somewhere over there
We heard the barking of the shepherd's dog.
Over all the dips and swales
Above the whispering of the wind
Through the grass — above the twittering
Of the mountain birds
Across the intervening vales
Their echoing voices carried.
We scanned the distant hillsides until
We caught glimpses of muslin white patches
Moving through the green of the
Far hill high above the valley.

We stood still and watched and listened
And did not talk and in the almost
Ethereal sylvan silence came the melodic
Ringing of a silvery, tinkling sheep bell.

RE-ENGINEERING

by Jack Sept

After sitting in meetings for hours
Listening to changes and such
I get a very distinct feeling
That I've heard this way too much

Oh yes, I've been empowered
and I work in a collaborative mode
And I've damn sure been flattened out
As all of the boxes showed

Am I ephemeral or perennial?
Permanent or intermittent?
And if there is a new organization
Can I really be sure that I'm in it?

All my former customers are now called "stakeholders"
And this is an awesome task you've placed upon my shoulders
Cause I've been asked to communicate, go out and sell my wares . . .
But it's got to be done by someone else
Cause they eliminated Public Affairs

I've looked for help from my elders
Who were willing to lend me a hand
But they're all vanished with smiles
On their faces . . . clutching 25 grand!

So I got very entreprenuerial
And I went to Del Vail with my fear
He said, "Jack, it's not mid-life crisis,
You're just being re-engineered!"

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